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***When the Girls Come Out to Play: Teenage Working-Class Girls' Leisure between the Wars.* By Katharine Milcoy (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017. x plus 166 pp. £19.99).**

In *When the Girls Come Out to Play*, Katharine Milcoy makes a series of important claims regarding the significance of commercial leisure to the lives of young women in interwar Britain. Placing young women at the centre of the changing leisure landscape, Milcoy argues that leisure culture was not only an increasingly prominent aspect of girls' day-to-day lives but that, in the interwar period, leisure superseded work as the primary arena in which girls worked through and expressed their individual identities.

After an opening literature review, the chapters take a thematic approach, each considering the relationship between leisure and girlhood from a different perspective. The book's early chapters have particularly strong conceptual underpinnings. Chapter Two, entitled 'Leisure. What Leisure?', uses oral history participants' refrain that they 'didn't have leisure' when growing up in the interwar period as a prompt to consider definitions of leisure. Here, Milcoy deconstructs the work-leisure paradigm and argues for a reconceptualization of leisure that recognises that men and women experienced leisure differently, that the meanings of leisure changed over time and that the line between leisure and work was blurred. Similarly, Chapter Three examines the notion of 'the girl' as a social construct and demonstrates how the figure of the girl was bound to prevailing understandings of both gender and class.

Elsewhere, the focus shifts away from these broad discourses to consider the materiality of young women's lives in the 1920s and 1930s, and much attention is paid to the connections between girls' labour lives and their leisure lives. As Milcoy explains, the introduction of mechanised production processes within light industries, such as the food trade and dress-making, created new employment opportunities for women. Although this work was monotonous and not particularly well paid, it was regular and so provided girls with a steady income and a degree of independence. With improved financial means, girls were able to actively participate in commercial leisure such as the cinema, dancehalls, magazine culture and fashion. While 'adults' from across the class spectrum were perturbed by the 'modern girl' and her leisure practices, girls themselves embraced the role models offered to them through popular culture and used these to redefine themselves and their femininity.

The book's most important contribution comes in Chapter Five, which brings together the author's reconceptualization of leisure with a wealth of rich primary source material to present a more nuanced account of how girls actually engaged in leisure culture. Pushing back against the earlier suggestions that girls' new working patterns were facilitating their engagement with commercial leisure, this chapter on 'The Imaginative Consumer' explores how girls on low incomes were able to participate in leisure activities beyond their financial means. Milcoy argues here that historians need to be more sensitive to the difference between 'purchasing' leisure and 'acquiring it', stressing that there were ways of 'acquiring' leisure that circumvented the need for cash. When it came to the cinema, girls 'bunked in', made their dates pay or simply bought the cheapest tickets available and then moved to better seats once they had been admitted. Elsewhere, girls used fake tickets to get into dances and wore rosary beads as jewellery. In addition to these lovely examples of girls' illicit behaviour, the real strength of the chapter lays in its discussion of working-class cultures of finance. Through discussions of credit culture and the intersections of work and leisure, this research not only nuances traditional narratives that associate the emergence of youth culture with increasing amounts of disposal income, but, more broadly, it demonstrates the need to consider leisure practice and constructions of gender within the material realities of individuals' day-to-day lives.

Beyond offering new insights into the leisure lives of young women, at the book's outset, Milcoy begins to make a significant intervention into social history more broadly by stressing the importance of region and locality as categories of analysis. This study is explicitly situated within the particular socio-economic conditions of the London borough of Bermondsey. Chapter One demonstrates how being rooted in a particular geographical space informed girls' leisure lives through employment opportunities as well as through the leisure infrastructures provided by voluntary organisations and local government and Milcoy offers some lovely details here on Bermondsey's particular character in the interwar years. Unfortunately, this focus does not continue throughout the book as the analysis turns towards broader themes. However, these early sections do much to demonstrate the potential for analyses of locality to bridge the distance between individual experience and broader socio-economic change.

While the book's overarching claims are significant, there are a couple of missed opportunities. Firstly, the book makes strong use of historic newspapers, government reports and interwar social studies as source material but the oral history testimony considered is tantalisingly brief. Fifteen original oral history testimonies were collected for this project and these add much colour to Milcoy's discussions, but these are most often used in a supplementary capacity. Given the richness of this material and the book's central focus on how young women created identities for themselves, it is a shame that these oral histories are not subject to more close analysis of their own. Also, the historiographical framing of the piece is somewhat dated. The book's introduction makes a compelling case as to why girls need to be incorporated into histories of leisure but the claim that this remains a marginalised area of scholarship is overstated (particularly with regards to the interwar period). In recent years Claire Langhamer, Penny Tinkler, Selina Todd and others have produced important monographs on this theme and it is a shame that this female-authored work was not incorporated more fully into the framing of this research.

Overall, *When the Girls Come Out to Play* makes a fine contribution to the growing body of work on cultures of girlhood in the twentieth century. Very accessible in style and packed full of wonderful primary source evidence, this book is particularly well-placed to feature on the reading lists of undergraduate courses exploring gender, leisure and/or class in modern Britain.

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